

Sounding Off...

Editor, *Duxbury Clipper*:

The opposition by the Duxbury Board of Health and concerned citizens to the expansion of the North Hill Golf Course is validated by similar concerns expressed by best-selling author Rachel Carson. It is interesting to note that events that occurred in Duxbury provided the momentum for her monumental book *Silent Spring*.

In 1957, Olga Owens Huckins, a Duxbury resident and friend of Carson, created a little bird sanctuary on her land. When a state insect-control project began working in that area, Huckins noticed that some of the birds were dropping dead. She sent a letter to Rachel Carson who perused the emerging scientific studies of DDT and other chemical pest controls. She found graphic evidence of their toxicity.

Carson decided to write a series of magazine articles on the subject for the *New Yorker* which, over the next 4 years, grew into the explosive best seller *Silent Spring*. As a result, DDT and many other pesticides cited in the book were outlawed. However, many of those mentioned are still used widely as insecticides and herbicides.

For those who are still undecided about the North Hill expansion, we recommend that you scan the library's copy of *Silent Spring*.

Agnes and Earle Hanna
DeLorenzo Drive

Editor, *Duxbury Clipper*:

In the Feb. 15 *Clipper* a letter from the ad hoc North Hill Expansion Committee outlined some of the history of Town Meeting votes about the acquisition and proposed uses of the 300+ acres known as the North Hill property. That letter incorrectly stated that the Annual Town Meeting of 1994 "postponed indefinitely the expansion project," while actually the vote was to deny the selectmen's request for authority to appropriate funds for expansion of the golf course.

Of course, past votes are ancient history now. The question today is whether it is in the best interests of the town to authorize expenditures of \$1.5 million or more to expand the 9-hole municipal golf course to 18 holes.

Many people seem to think that would be a financial bonanza significantly reducing our taxes. There is plenty of evidence to question that assumption.

The RKG economic feasibility study of April 1993 mentioned in the ad hoc committee's Feb. 15 letter, clearly stated that the maximum income to the Town would be realized if the town operated the course itself rather than lease the operation to a management company as it now does. The new 5-year lease to the Gunnarsons (now required to be rebid) would give the town an average annual income of \$101,000, culminating in a payment of \$125,000 in 1999. Another management company has challenged this bid, suggesting that a higher offer is likely. And if the town were to operate the course, the logical result would be even more income for the town.

By comparison, according to the chairman of the Brewster Golf Commission the Brewster 18-hole municipal course (described in the *Boston Globe* of Jan. 3, 1995, as "nationally acclaimed") has averaged \$130,000 to the town but returned only \$80,000 in 1994. This course is operated by the town. If leased out to a management company, the net to the town would logically be less.

Also the 2 18-hole municipal courses in Dennis, operated by the town, have netted the town "about \$200,000" in 1993, and "nearly \$300,000 in 1994" or an average of \$125,000 per course.

It would appear that Duxbury could just about duplicate these figures by operating the present 9-hole course, without spending millions and bulldozing 80-90 acres of our central greenbelt woodlands. And assuming that Duxbury could do better with an 18-hole course than these well-established ones is pure speculation.

John Joline
Spring St.

Editor, *Duxbury Clipper*:

The North Hill Expansion Committee's (NHEC) presentation to the Finance Committee raises some serious concerns. The NHEC failed to address the competition of neighboring existing and planned golf courses and, most importantly, the impact on the Town's water supply.

The existing and proposed courses are within an Aquifer Protection District, the primary zone of contribution for the Tremont, Partridge, Evergreen, Mayflower, Depot, Damon, Millbrook, and Teakettle wellfields. The aquifer, which is underlying the North Hill area, is the Town's primary source of water. Any stresses, such as drought, pumpage, and/or contamination will reverberate throughout the entire system. The aquifer is relatively narrow in thickness, only a few feet below land surface and only 12-20 feet below upland areas. The sandy soils allow for rapid recharge, however, they also allow for easier penetration of contaminants, such as pesticides, herbicides, and nitrates.

The SEA Study (1992) reports nitrate concentrations of 3.5 ppm in the ground water below the existing 9 holes (the maximum allowable limit is 10 ppm). Given that the Depot Station wells have less than 1 ppm, this raises concern. The application of fertilizer-nitrate will be doubled with the expansion of the course, thereby increasing the risk of slugs of nitrate moving through the aquifer.

The expansion plan includes 4 monitoring wells to assess the infiltration of chemicals to the groundwater. First of all, if chemicals show up in the test wells, then it's too late; they have already entered the groundwater. Also, to state the cost of this monitoring is premature and misleading; Horsley and Witten have not reviewed the proposed site, submitted comprehensive proposal, or gone through the required bidding process.

The new golf course plan calls for the lining of the kettle holes, that were created by retreating glaciers, and using them as part of the irrigation system. These artificial ponds will also serve as catchment basins for some of the runoff of water and any chemical substances that have been applied to the turf. I question the water quality of these basins if they attract wildlife. In addition, the capture of these waters will reduce the amount of water recharged to our aquifer. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) told me that much of what is applied to golf courses is similar to what homeowners can apply to their lawns. However,

the acute toxicity of some golf course chemicals disallows homeowner use and only a licensed agronomist can handle them. In essence, we are entrusting the safety of our water to a single person and the Town can be held liable for tort damages.

The present 9 holes are reportedly drawing 50,000 gallons per day directly from the North Hill Marsh Pond. The NHEC projects that the new course will consume less than 100,000 gallons per day, thus avoiding the need a Department of Environmental Protection Water Withdrawal Permit. Usage of less than 100,000 gallons per day (or roughly 3 million gallons per month for an 18 hole course) appears to be grossly underestimated. In 1993, Marshfield Country Club withdrew an average of 4.8 million gallons per month during the months of June, July, and August. Pembroke Country Club withdrew an average of 6.9 million gallons per month over that same time period. The Committee's projected daily water usage is equivalent to the daily consumption of water in nearly 357 households. However, DEP informed me that Duxbury as a whole is consuming almost twice the State average. In addition, we have exceeded our DEP withdrawal permit by 300,000 gallons per day for the past 4 years!

We have open space, conservation land, the bay, the beach, and historical homes. As these assets become scarce our property values increase. The value of our water can not be overstated, it is a precious and finite resource. Any misuse can and will result in a direct and costly impact on your property values and your taxes. Based on the NHEC projections, the revenue that will be generated by the expanded course pales relative to the potential liability. We should not use our homes as collateral in this venture.

Rachel Carson included in *Silent Spring* a poignant quote by E. B. White:

"I am pessimistic about the human race because it is too ingenious for its own good. Our approach to nature is to beat it into submission. We would stand a better chance of survival if we accommodated ourselves to this planet and viewed it appreciatively instead of skeptically and dictatorially."

We encourage you to vote NO on the expansion of the North Hill Golf Course.

Holly and Jimmy Morris
Bay View Rd.